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Justice Department Reaches Proposed Agreement with the Town of East Haven, Connecticut, to Resolve Allegations of Misconduct by the East Haven Police Department



The Justice Department today announced that the town of East Haven, Conn., memorialized its intention to enter into a settlement agreement to resolve the department’s civil investigation of allegations that the East Haven Police Department (EHPD) engaged in a pattern or practice of unlawful discrimination against Latinos on account of their race, color or national origin. The proposed agreement also resolves allegations that EHPD engaged in a pattern or practice of use of excessive force, unconstitutional searches and seizures and retaliation against persons who witnessed police misconduct or criticized EHPD’s practices.

Joseph Maturo Jr., the mayor of East Haven, outlined in a letter of intent a schedule to obtain necessary approvals from other town officials to enter into a binding agreement that will lead to broad institutional changes in EHPD’s policies and practices. The proposed agreement builds on reforms initiated by the town and is intended to strengthen the community’s trust in EHPD. Once fully executed by the town, the proposed agreement will be filed with the U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut for approval.

“We are pleased that Mayor Maturo has made a clear commitment to rebuild the East Haven Police Department by agreeing to enter into a court-enforceable agreement that will result in constitutional and effective policing for all persons who live, work and travel in East Haven,” said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. “The proposed agreement will serve as a blueprint for sustainable reform that will provide the police department with the necessary tools and guidance it needs to restore trust from all segments of the East Haven community.”



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“There is no place for invidious discrimination by law enforcement officers, and today’s commitment from the mayor signals a new day for the East Haven Police Department,” said David B. Fein, the U.S. Attorney for the District Connecticut. “Once the proposed agreement is in place, the men and women who courageously serve on the police department will get the support they need to carry out their duties in a lawful and respectful manner, while ensuring strong public safety for the people of East Haven.”

The proposed agreement provides for comprehensive reforms in seven core areas and provides for a joint compliance expert who will independently assess EHPD’s implementation of the agreement. The seven core areas are:

- Biased-free policing, including measures on mandatory training, collection and analysis of data on police encounters, development of a meaningful language access plan, notification to consulates when foreign nationals are detained and steps to promote biased-free policing in EHPD’s hiring, promotion and performance assessment processes;
- Use of force, including the development of current policies on use of force and measures that provide for comprehensive training, consistent force reporting and thorough force reviews and investigations by supervisors and the internal affairs officer;
- Searches and seizures, including the development of up-to-date policies and measures on applying for search warrants, documenting consent searches, notifying supervisors of felony arrests and other “contempt-of-cop” situations, inspecting detainees for injuries, and preserving individuals’ First Amendment rights to observe and record police activity;
- Policies and training, including measures to ensure that officers and supervisors have sufficient guidance to carry out their law enforcement responsibilities in a lawful, effective and ethical manner;
- Civilian complaints, internal investigations and discipline, including measures to ensure that all allegations of officer misconduct are received and thoroughly investigated and that officers who engage in misconduct are held accountable by a disciplinary system that is fair and consistent;
- Supervision and management, including steps that provide for close and effective supervision to assist officers in carrying out their duties in lawful manner and systems that allow supervisors to identify, correct and prevent misconduct; and
- Community engagement and oversight, including measures to create robust partnerships with all segments of the East Haven community, disseminate public information on reforms and policing activities, and solicit feedback on the relationship between EHPD and the community.

In September 2009, the Justice Department opened a pattern or practice investigation into allegations that EHPD officers engaged in discriminatory traffic enforcement, use of excessive force, and unconstitutional searches and seizures in violation of the Constitution and federal anti-discrimination laws. In December 2011, the department completed its investigation and issued a letter finding reasonable cause to believe that EHPD engaged in a pattern or practice of unlawful discrimination against Latinos and other misconduct. The investigation was conducted jointly by the Civil Rights Division’s Special Litigation Section and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Connecticut.

The full text of the 2011 Findings Letter, the Letter of Intent and the proposed settlement

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agreement are available at www.justice.gov/crt/about/spl/findsettle.php. For more information on the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, please visit www.justice.gov/crt.

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